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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
CONCEPT OF DEATH

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State College
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Psychology

by
Karen Sue Paton
June 1979

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Approved by:


Chairperson




June 14, 1979

ABSTRACT

The problem of the study was to investigate the four conceptual death-related categories of reversibility, personification, denial, and finality. Data was secured from 150 children aged 3-13 and 50 adults. The hypothesis was that subjects will score significantly different on the constructed Death Concept Questionnaire. Analysis of data indicated there were significant differences in responses between the four age groups on the four death-related concepts. The concepts of reversibility and denial followed similar developmental trends. The concept of finality followed a developmental trend, but in an inverse direction compared to the reversibility and denial concepts. The personification concept did not follow a developmental trend. There were no significant sex differences in responses to the four death-related concepts.

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DEDICATION

TO MY GRANDMA - Who taught me the importance
of love, life, and laughter. I Love You.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Children never live in a world apart from death. Rather, they are engaged in making a series of discoveries that adults might count themselves privileged to share.

Robert Kastenbaum

Psychologists have become increasingly interested in the study of death and dying. The most common populations investigated have been adults either facing imminent death or attempting to cope with the loss of a loved one (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Currently in our society, most people die in a hospital setting. Therefore, many children today lack personal experiences with death and are often misinformed and overprotected when death does occur. As a result, children may experience confusion and may incorporate within themselves attitudes about death similar to those held by their parents (Lester, 1970).

Within our adult framework lies a tragic misconception claiming that the child is most like us in thinking and least like us in feeling. Conversely, Elkind (1974) has stated the reverse to be true. Children are not miniature adults, and they do not have the same thought processes as adults. An additional misconception is that the child

lives in a world apart from death. According to Zeligs (1974), the child is deeply involved with the mystery of death.

A review of the literature specifically in the area of the child's perception of death indicated three relevant studies prior to 1977. These were studies by Nagy (1948), Childers and Wimmer (1971), and Koocher (1973).

Nagy (1948) examined 378 Hungarian children 3-10 years of age utilizing unstructured procedures. Inquiries were in the form of written compositions for 7-10 year olds, drawings with no specific instructions for 6-10 year olds, and discussions with 3-10 year old subjects. Nagy's results indicated three levels of development of the concept of death: (a) the child 3-5 years of age denies death; herein, death is seen as a departure and is temporary; (b) the child 5-9 years of age conceives of death as a person and believes that only those die whom the deathman carries off; (c) the child 9 years of age recognizes death as a process which takes place within people, and is final--a finding similar to that reported for adults.

Prior to 1971, little effort was made to organize and refine death-related research with children. Childers and Wimmer (1971) conducted a study on the awareness of the universality and irrevocability of death as held by children 4-10 years of age. The sole purpose of their study was to test the hypothesis that the child, regardless

of age, can be rationally aware of death as universal and irrevocable. Individual discussions were held with 75 children. These discussions followed a series of questions: (1) Say whatever comes to your mind about death; (2) have you seen anything or anyone dead; (3a) which of these can dead people do; (3c) does this mean that they can come back to life; (4) does everybody die. The children were also asked to draw or write what death meant to them. Upon completion, those old enough to write were asked to tell whether or not everybody would die and whether dead people could come alive again. Results indicated that awareness of death as universal increased as a function of age.

With refinement and organization of research techniques, Koocher (1973) used a semistructured interview procedure to study the understanding of death in 75 American children and adolescents (ages 6-15). This study included three separate parts: (a) similarities subtest; (b) cognitive development tasks; and (c) death-related questions. There were four death-related questions: What makes things die? How do you make dead things come back to life? When will you die? What will happen then? More realistic appraisals of death by children were noted as their levels of cognitive development advanced. As opposed to Nagy (1948), Koocher (1973) found no personification-type responses. Koocher attributed Nagy's idea of personification to cultural differences of subjects in the two studies. Koocher

suggested that American children were more inclined to use specificity of detail as a means to mastery and hence "control" over death, rather than personification.

Koocher's study did not investigate ideas about death in children below 6 years of age.

Since the results of the present study were first presented in 1977 (Note 1), two relevant studies were published by White and Prawat (1978) and Kane (1979). White and Prawat interviewed 170 children, kindergarten through grade 4, and tested them for conservation. The children were presented one of two stories about an elderly woman's death depicting the woman as either a nice person or an unkind person. In an interview, the children's understanding of three concepts, irrevocability, cessation of bodily processes, and universality, was assessed. The study indicated that the understanding of death as universal was significantly related to the child's level of cognitive development. Nagy (1948) used children's age level as opposed to their level of cognitive development in the determination of her groups. According to White and Prawat (1978), the understanding of the irrevocability of death and the cessation of bodily processes was not significantly related to the child's level of cognitive development. Interestingly, more males than females understood the concept of cessation.

Research by Kane (1979) was carried out within the

framework of the theory of cognitive development. Subjects included 122 mid-American, middle class, white boys and girls, aged 3-12 years. Each subject was seen individually in an open-ended, informal, flexible interview about human death lasting about 15 minutes. After the child's ideas of human death were ascertained, Kane determined the appropriate category placement of the child's ideas. Nine components of the death concept--realization, separation, immobility, irrevocability, causality, dysfunctionality, universality, insensitivity, and appearance--were "derived from prior works." The component of the concept that children held at each age and the degree to which each was present was determined. Her data indicated that children's thinking about death developed according to Piaget's pre-operational, concrete operations, and formal operations stages.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for the present study involves five areas: (a) adequate assessment techniques; (b) sex differences; (c) data collection from children at each age level 3-6 years of age; (d) contradictory results in the literature; and (e) cultural differences of subjects.

Assessment techniques in the literature were primarily in the form of open-ended interviews (Nagy, 1948; Koocher, 1973; Kane, 1979) with questions presented unsystematically

(White & Prawat, 1978); (Childers & Wimmer, 1971). In addition, the research instruments used were not standardized and did not include reliability or validity coefficients.

The interviews utilized in the current study were systematically structured. All subjects were presented the same questions in the same order. The instrument used was finalized after a pilot study was completed to refine the comprehensibility of items for younger subjects.

Even though approximately equal numbers of males and females were used in the studies reviewed (Nagy, 1948; Childers & Wimmer, 1971; Koocher, 1973; White & Prawat, 1978; Kane, 1979), the question of sex differences related to death concepts in children had not been systematically investigated. The only mention of sex differences was by White and Prawat in that more males than females understood the concept of cessation. The current study empirically investigated sex differences in children for the death-related concepts of reversibility, personification, denial, and finality.

While the studies reviewed purported to investigate death-related concepts in younger children, subjects 6 years of age or under were grouped together in most cases. The studies and number of children grouped together are as follows:

| <u>Studies</u> | <u>Children \leq 6 Years Old</u> |
|--------------------------|---|
| Nagy (1948) | 30 |
| Childers & Wimmer (1971) | 19 |
| Koocher (1973) | 0 |
| White & Prawat (1978) | 20 |

The interpretive problem with grouping younger children in this manner is that it remains unclear as to how many children were represented in the age range groups below the age of 6. Kane (1979) was the only researcher to maintain and specify the individual ages of children used as subjects.

There was little agreement in the literature regarding concepts involved in children's perceptions of death. While Nagy (1948) investigated the concept of personification in Hungarian children, Koocher (1973) attributed the lack of this concept in his subjects to cultural differences. Childers and Wimmer (1971) researched levels of cognitive development related to children's perception of death. White and Prawat (1978) related the concepts of universality and irrevocability to children's perception of the attractiveness of a story character. Originally, ten separate concepts were used by Kane (1979) to classify children's perceptions of death. However, Kane combined the concepts of personification and realization as one concept. Kane reported that the concept of inevitability of death occurred in the child's perception frequently by

the age of 6. Conversely, Nagy (1948) found that children do not realize that death is inevitable until age 9.

The ethnic constituency of the subjects studied in the literature reviewed was diversified or unclear. Nagy (1948) used Hungarian children as subjects while Childers and Wimmer (1971) did not specify the ethnic make-up of their subject population. Subjects for White and Prawat's (1978) research were drawn from three public schools. No mention was made concerning the cultural composition of their subjects. The subjects in Koocher's (1973) study were 20% Black, Oriental, or American Indian and 80% White children drawn from summer recreation and school enrichment programs. Kane's (1979) subjects were White mid-American, middle class children.

Hypothesis

The experimental hypothesis was that the subjects will score significantly different on the constructed Death Concept Scale as a function of age. This scale is used to examine the frequency of occurrence of the following four death-related concepts: (a) reversibility--death is seen as temporary in which a person can come back to life; (b) personification--death is perceived as a person who has the ability to take away life; (c) denial--a refusal or inability to accept death; and (d) finality--the cessation of all biological functioning, the ending of physical being.

Description of Questionnaire

Taking Nagy's research into consideration and recognizing the discrepancies of earlier research, a questionnaire was constructed (Appendix A). Four death-related concepts--reversibility, personification, denial, and finality--were evaluated using 24 questions with six directed toward each of the concepts (Appendix B). The 18 questions in support of the concepts reversibility, denial, and finality were counterbalanced. The six questions involving support of the concept personification were not counterbalanced. The semantic and grammatical difficulty for children associated with reversing the direction of a question in support of the personification concept is exemplified as follows: The question stated in a positive direction in support of personification is "is death a boogie man?" The question stated in a negative direction would be "is death not a boogie man?" All 24 questions were ordered on the questionnaire by the use of a random numbers table.

A pilot study was conducted to determine the appropriateness of the items to each concept and to assess the comprehensibility of the questionnaire to younger and adult subjects. Forty subjects, 10 from the 3-5, 7-9, 11-13, and adult age groups, participated.

In scoring the questionnaire, those items stated in a negative direction for support of a concept were scored one for a no answer and zero for a yes answer. Those

questions stated in a positive direction for support of a concept were scored zero for a no answer and one for a yes answer. Those scores for items corresponding to each concept were added. The result was four concept scores for each subject. The highest and the lowest scores in support of each concept are six and zero respectively.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in death-related research, especially with children as subjects, are of primary importance and obvious concern (Koocher, 1974). Each child is unique and needs careful consideration and compassionate handling in dealing with his attitudes and ideas about death and dying. Before proceeding with the research, certain precautions were taken. First, the ethics committee in the Psychology Department at California State College at San Bernardino approved the research proposal. Second, a complete description of the proposed research and availability of results were presented to and accepted by public school district administrators and individual school principals with their teaching staffs.

Parent approval forms (Appendix C), detailing the rationale for the study, were sent home with the potential student subjects. A telephone number was listed on the parent approval form to be used by the subject's parent or guardian if that person had additional questions or needed

to obtain therapeutic support. Permission was obtained from each child prior to answering the questions on the Death Concept Scale.

The interviewing environment was selected to minimize stress that might possibly be caused by the subject matter. A small, colorful room with windows was selected at each school with as little restriction as possible. Because of the potential emotional issues related to the nature of the questionnaire, the need for follow-up was of primary concern. Special arrangements were made with the college counseling center for any subjects in need of therapeutic support.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects

Two hundred subjects, 50 from the 3-5, 7-9, 11-13, and adult age groups participated. Within the 3-5, 7-9, and 11-13 age groups, there were at least 15 subjects at each age level. In other words, in the 3-5 age group, there were at least 15 subjects aged 3, 15 subjects aged 4, and 15 subjects aged 5. The age range of the four groups respectively was 3.0 - 5.9, 7.1 - 9.8, 11.0 - 13.9, 18.0 - 35.6. An equal number of males and females were included in each age group. All subjects attended regular classrooms in four Southern California public-funded institutions: Frazee Community Center, Perris Primary School, Goodhope Intermediate School, and California State College at San Bernardino. Cultural and ethnic percentages of the total school populations were considered to establish the ethnic composition of each age group. Therefore, each of the four age groups were comprised of 34 Caucasian, 8 Black, and 8 Mexican-American subjects. Subjects 3-13 years of age returning parental consent forms granting children permission to participate were randomly selected by the use of a random numbers table. Parental responses

regarding the parent approval form are shown in Appendix D. Adult subjects were college students currently enrolled in Physical Education undergraduate courses who volunteered to participate.

Questionnaire

In order to assess developmental attitudes towards death, the results of the mentioned pilot study were used in the construction of the Death Concept Scale questionnaire. The questionnaire is composed of 24 questions, six directed toward each of four concepts: (a) reversibility, (b) personification, (c) denial, and (d) finality (Appendix B).

Procedure

With ethical concerns in mind, a telephone number was made available to the subjects' parent(s) or guardian if additional questions arose after consent had been given to the investigator. The interviewing environment used at each school was selected to minimize the potentially emotional issues related to the nature of the subject matter.

Arrangements were made with the college counseling center for subjects in need of therapeutic support after the completion of the study.

Subjects in the 3-13 age groups were individually accompanied from their classroom to a small conference

room within each school by the investigator. Each subject was seated at a table. The investigator said, "I am interested in finding out how you feel about some things. Please answer yes or no to the questions. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to. You can stop if you like. I will read a question to you, and I would like you to give me the best answer you can think of, either yes or no." The investigator asked each subject each question from the constructed Death Concept Scale in the same order. When in doubt, the children were told, "Just give the best answer you can think of." The investigator circled either the yes or no response for each item. The investigator noted on the questionnaire the sex, age, and name of each subject. After the completion of the questionnaire, each subject was told, "Thank you for spending time with me and telling me your ideas," and then returned to the classroom. No problems were encountered during the interviewing sessions for subjects 3-13 years of age; therefore, all data was included in the analysis.

Adult subjects filled out their own questionnaire. The first 10 adult subjects completed the questioning individually, and the second 10 adult subjects completed the questionnaire in a group. Noting no significant difference in the responses of the first 10 adult subjects questioned individually in comparison to the second 10 adult subjects questioned in a group, the remaining 30

adult subjects completed the questionnaire in a group situation. The same instructions and procedures were followed as in the younger age groups. Adult subjects were told, "If you are interested in the results, leave me your name and address." No problems were encountered during the interviewing sessions for adult subjects; therefore, all data was included in the analysis.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

A 2 x 2 analysis of variance procedure (Kirk, 1968) was performed on each of the four death concepts--reversibility, personification, denial, and finality. As indicated in Table 1, there was a main effect for age, $F(3, 192) = 159.5779$, $p < .001$, for the concept of reversibility. There was no main effect for sex or interaction. Because there was a main effect for age, Tukey's

Table 1
Analysis of Variance Summary Table
for the Concept of Reversibility

| Source | <u>SS</u> | <u>df</u> | <u>MS</u> | <u>F</u> |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Age (A) | 797.895 | 3 | 265.298 | 159.5779* |
| Sex (S) | 6.845 | 1 | 6.845 | 4.1173 |
| Age x Sex (A x S) | 5.655 | 3 | 1.885 | 1.1338 |
| S within AS | 319.200 | 192 | 1.662 | |

* $p < .001$.

Honest Significant Difference (HSD) (Kirk, 1968) multiple comparison of means test was applied to the data (Appendix

E). The 3-5 age group scored significantly higher on the reversibility concept than did the 7-9 age group, the 11-13 age group, and the adult group. In addition, the 7-9 age group scored significantly higher on the reversibility concept in comparison to the 11-13 age group and adult age group.

The analysis of variance presented in Table 2 for the concept of personification demonstrates a main effect for age, $F(3,192) = 48.4018$, $p < .001$. There was not a main

Table 2
Analysis of Variance Summary Table
for the Concept of Personification

| Source | <u>SS</u> | <u>df</u> | <u>MS</u> | <u>F</u> |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Age (A) | 187.920 | 3 | 62.640 | 48.4018* |
| Sex (S) | 2.880 | 1 | 2.880 | 2.2254 |
| Age x Sex (A x S) | 8.400 | 3 | 8.400 | 2.1636 |
| S within AS | 248.480 | 192 | 1.294 | |

* $p < .001$

effect for sex or interaction between sex and age. As shown in Appendix F, Tukey's HSD test indicated the 3-5 age group scored significantly lower on the personification concept than did the 7-9 age group. Conversely, the 7-9 age group scored significantly higher in comparison to the

11-13 age group and the adult group.

The two-way analysis of variance performed on the concept of denial is represented in Table 3. A main effect for age, $F(3, 192) = 256.67$, $p < .001$, and no main effect for sex was determined. In addition, there was not a significant interaction between sex and age. Tukey's HSD test (Appendix G) demonstrated the differences between the age group means for the concept of denial. The 3-5 age group scored significantly higher on the denial concept than did the 7-9, 11-13, and adult age groups. Similarly, the 7-9 age group scored significantly higher on the denial concept in comparison to the 11-13 age group and adult age group.

Table 3
Analysis of Variance Summary Table
for the Concept of Denial

| Source | <u>SS</u> | <u>df</u> | <u>MS</u> | <u>F</u> |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Age (A) | 911.815 | 3 | 303.938 | 256.669* |
| Sex (S) | 3.645 | 1 | 3.645 | 3.078 |
| Age x Sex (A x S) | 9.055 | 3 | 3.018 | 2.549 |
| S within AS | 227.360 | 192 | 1.184 | |

* $p < .001$.

As shown in Table 4, the analysis of variance for the

concept of finality resulted in a main effect for age, $F(3, 192) = 480.08$, $p < .001$. There was no main effect for sex or interaction between sex and age. According to Tukey's HSD test (Appendix H), the 3-5 age group scored significantly lower than did the 7-9, 11-13, and adult age groups on the finality concept. Furthermore, 7-9 age group scored significantly lower than did the 11-13 and adult age groups on the finality concept.

Table 4
Analysis of Variance Summary Table
for the Concept of Finality

| Source | <u>SS</u> | <u>df</u> | <u>MS</u> | <u>F</u> |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Age (A) | 1043.575 | 3 | 347.8583 | 480.081* |
| Sex (S) | .125 | 1 | .1250 | .173 |
| Age x Sex (A x S) | .175 | 3 | .5833 | .081 |
| S within AS | 139.120 | 192 | .7246 | |

* $p < .001$.

A graphic representation of the means obtained for each age group for each of the four concepts is shown in Figure 1. The concepts of denial and reversibility manifested similar patterns with strong support evidenced at the 3-5 age group level and little support at the adult age group level. The concept of personification followed

the pattern of the previous two concepts at the 11-13 and adult age group levels. The 3-5 age group level showed little support for the concept of personification. As expected, the pattern of the finality concept was inversely related to the first two concepts. The individual items are listed with each concept and the actual percentages of subject response in support of each item and each concept are presented in Appendix B.

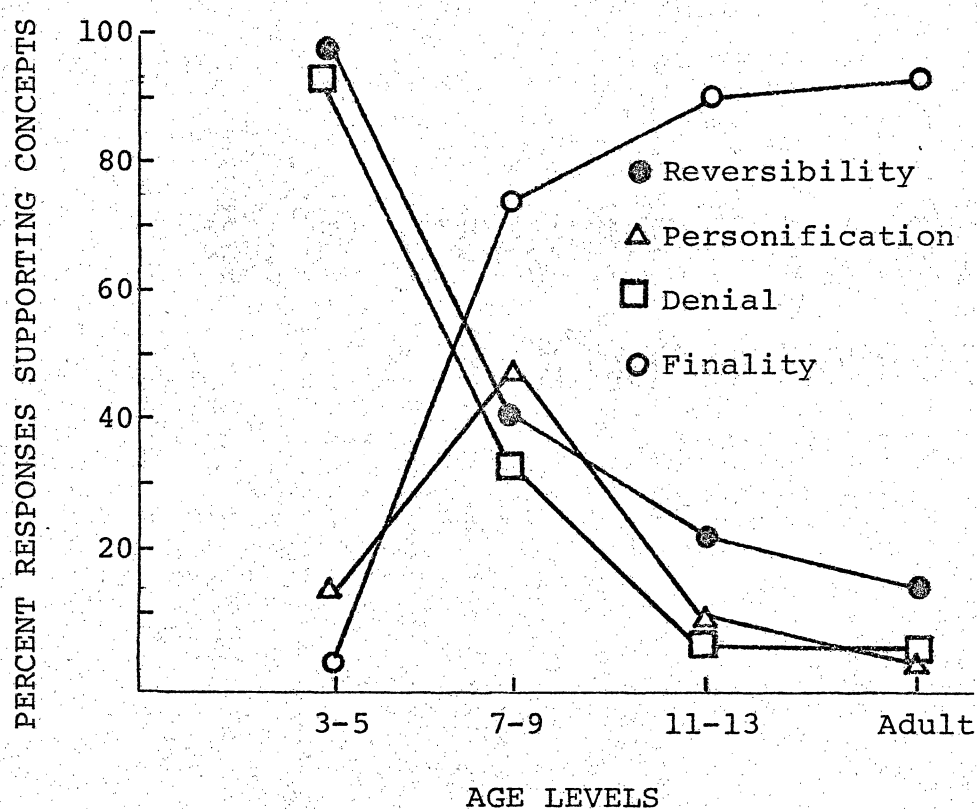


Figure 1. Percent of responses supporting each concept as a function of age level.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Four conceptual death-related categories were investigated through the utilization of systematically structured interviews. A total of 150 children 3-13 years of age and 50 adult subjects completed the Death Concept Scale questionnaire. Cultural composition of each of four age groups, 3-5, 7-9, 11-13, and adult, was similar to the cultural composition of the schools from which subjects were drawn. There were no significant sex differences in responses between the four age groups on the four death-related concepts.

As anticipated, there were significant differences in responses between the four age groups on the four death-related concepts. The findings indicate that the concepts of reversibility and denial followed similar developmental trends. Almost all 3-5 year old children (98%) supported the concept of reversibility. Death was seen as temporary in that a dead person could come back to life. This finding supports Nagy's (1948) conclusion that the child 3-5 years of age sees death as temporary. The 7-9, 11-13, and adult age groups supported the concept of reversibility by 40%, 21%, and 14%, respectively.

Similarly, the concept of denial followed the same developmental trend with 94%, 32%, 9%, and 5% of the 3-5, 7-9, 11-13, and adult age groups in support. That is, the refusal or inability to accept death decreased as a function of age. This finding supports Nagy's (1948) conclusion that the 3-5 year old denies death. The data in the current study indicated a decline in the support of the concepts reversibility and denial as a function of age.

The concept of finality also followed a developmental trend, but as anticipated, the trend was in an inverse direction in comparison to the concepts reversibility and denial. That is, as support for the concept reversibility and denial decreased, support for the finality concept increased as a function of age. The child 3-5 years of age did not see death as the cessation of all biological functioning. The actual percentages for support of the concept finality were 3% for the 3-5 year olds, 75% for the 7-9 year olds, 93% for the 11-13 year olds, and 95% for the adult group. These results support Nagy's finding that by the age of 9 death is recognized as final, a finding similar to that reported by Childers and Wimmer (1971).

The concept of personification did not follow a developmental trend. Nearly half of the 7-9 year old subjects (45%) perceived death as a person who had the ability to take away life. The percentage in support of

this concept for each age group was 13% for the 3-5 year olds, 9% for the 11-13 year olds, and 4% for the adults. The current findings support Nagy's conclusion that the child 5-9 conceives of death as a person. Koocher (1973) suggested that American children are more inclined to use specificity of detail as a means to "control" rather than personify death. The present study does not support Koocher's explanation. Since Kane (1979) combined the concept of personification with that of realization, the results of the current study cannot be compared to Kane's results.

The present study demonstrates that changes toward a more realistic awareness of death are made by children as they advance developmentally. Further, as shown by Koocher (1973), the 3-5 age group responded in support of the concepts of denial and reversibility. There was a reversible quality about death in that death was perceived as sleep--and sleep as death. Death was not personified, nor was it considered final. The 3-5 year old child envisioned a fairy tale world in order to maintain needed continuity.

The 7-9 year old child had an awareness of death, but it was distant to them and not personal. They were beginning to appreciate the intellectual notion of their death, but their experience was still fixed in the life of today. The concept of finality was beginning to solidify. Experiences and knowledge of death were beginning to enlarge and become organized. It is, however,

an age of transition as evidenced by the disparity in responses to each item for each concept (Appendix B) for this age group.

The 11-13 year old group had acquired an intellectual importance and understanding of death similar to the adult group. Death for the 11-13 year old did not have a reversible quality, nor was it denied or personified. Death was seen as a final process.

The adult age group recognized death as a process which takes place within us and is final. For the adult, death was not personified, denied, nor was it considered to have a reversible quality.

The results of the current investigation offer empirical data which aid in the understanding of the development of death-related concepts in children. The application of these findings will assist in a greater parental understanding of the development of death concepts in children. Consequently, through death education, both the child and parent will be able to talk about what death means to each of them on their own developmental level. A reduction in parental avoidance involving these matters would clear the way for a better understanding of the whole child.

While White and Prawat (1978) investigated a different concept, universality, the idea of a developmental process concerning death-related concepts in children was realized. The present research data indicates that as children move

toward adulthood their fund of knowledge becomes enlarged, organized, and repeatedly transformed. General intellectual development and unique life experiences contribute to changing conceptualizations. In addition, the general attitude toward death prevalent in the society are incorporated in the child's perception of death in the socialization process.

What we tell a child about death depends upon the age of the child, the nature of the event, and the degree of their interest. Clearly there are no absolutes. The present study concluded that children are capable of talking about death, a reality more psychologists, teachers, and parents must come to appreciate. Children are definitions of life itself. Therefore, as adults we must help relate to them that death and dying is a part of living.

We should raise our children to be prepared for death in the family at any time. We should live each day as if it were the last one and enjoy every moment we have together along with the appreciation of having fully lived, memories are the only gifts we can leave our children.

Elizabeth Kubler Ross

APPENDIX A

DEATH CONCEPT SCALE

Age _____

Name _____

Sex _____

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Is death the "Boogie Man?" | Yes | No |
| 2. Can a dead person hear me? | Yes | No |
| 3. Is death someone that grabs you? | Yes | No |
| 4. Can a person's body last forever? | Yes | No |
| 5. Is death someone that hurts you? | Yes | No |
| 6. Is a dead person gone forever? | Yes | No |
| 7. Can you stop yourself from dying? | Yes | No |
| 8. Does a dead person see? | Yes | No |
| 9. Can a person come back to life? | Yes | No |
| 10. Do you stop breathing when you die? | Yes | No |
| 11. Is death a man? | Yes | No |
| 12. Does death take away life? | Yes | No |
| 13. Are your mother and father going to die? | Yes | No |
| 14. Can a dead person wake up? | Yes | No |
| 15. Does it hurt people when you bury them? | Yes | No |
| 16. Does a dead person stay in the coffin? | Yes | No |
| 17. Can you run away from death? | Yes | No |
| 18. Are a dead person's eyes closed forever? | Yes | No |
| 19. Are you going to die someday? | Yes | No |
| 20. Is a dead person asleep? | Yes | No |
| 21. Do you stop feeling when you die? | Yes | No |
| 22. Does death wear a black hat? | Yes | No |
| 23. Do you stop eating when you die? | Yes | No |
| 24. Does death wear black clothes? | Yes | No |

APPENDIX B

PERCENTAGE OF SUBJECT RESPONSES IN SUPPORT OF EACH CONCEPT

| | | <u>Age Level</u> | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| <u>Reversibility Concept</u> | | <u>3-5</u> | <u>7-9</u> | <u>11-13</u> | <u>Adult</u> |
| 6. | Is a dead person gone forever? | 100 | 38 | 22 | 32 |
| 9. | Can a dead person come back to life? | 100 | 34 | 30 | 18 |
| 14. | Can a dead person wake up? | 98 | 20 | 10 | 0 |
| 16. | Does a dead person stay in the coffin? | 92 | 52 | 16 | 6 |
| 18. | Are a dead person's eyes closed forever? | 100 | 56 | 28 | 22 |
| 20. | Is a dead person asleep? | <u>98</u> | <u>40</u> | <u>22</u> | <u>10</u> |
| Average Percentage | | 98 | 40 | 21 | 14 |
| <u>Personification Concept</u> | | <u>3-5</u> | <u>7-9</u> | <u>11-13</u> | <u>Adult</u> |
| 1. | Is death a "boogie man?" | 2 | 30 | 4 | 6 |
| 3. | Is death someone that grabs you? | 8 | 54 | 8 | 6 |
| 5. | Is death someone that hurts you? | 10 | 62 | 22 | 12 |
| 11. | Is death a man? | 0 | 36 | 12 | 2 |
| 22. | Does death wear a black hat? | 22 | 26 | 6 | 0 |
| 24. | Does death wear black clothes? | <u>40</u> | <u>62</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>2</u> |
| Average Percentage | | 13 | 45 | 9 | 4 |

| | <u>Denial Concept</u> | <u>3-5</u> | <u>7-9</u> | <u>11-13</u> | <u>Adult</u> |
|-----|--|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| 4. | Can a person's body last forever? | 76 | 18 | 8 | 2 |
| 7. | Can you stop yourself from dying? | 100 | 36 | 10 | 6 |
| 12. | Does death take away life? | 98 | 34 | 10 | 18 |
| 13. | Are your mother and father going to die? | 100 | 42 | 8 | 0 |
| 17. | Can you run away from death? | 92 | 30 | 10 | 0 |
| 19. | Are you going to die someday? | <u>100</u> | <u>30</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>4</u> |
| | Average Percentage | 94 | 32 | 9 | 15 |

| | <u>Finality Concept</u> | <u>3-5</u> | <u>7-9</u> | <u>11-13</u> | <u>Adult</u> |
|-----|---|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2. | Can a dead person hear me? | 4 | 66 | 88 | 80 |
| 8. | Does a dead person see? | 0 | 76 | 92 | 96 |
| 10. | Do you stop breathing when you die? | 0 | 96 | 100 | 100 |
| 15. | Does it hurt people when you bury them? | 16 | 48 | 92 | 98 |
| 21. | Do you stop feeling when you die? | 2 | 82 | 92 | 96 |
| 23. | Do you stop eating when you die? | <u>0</u> | <u>86</u> | <u>96</u> | <u>96</u> |
| | Average Percentage | 3 | 75 | 93 | 95 |

APPENDIX C

PARENT APPROVAL FORM

Student's Name _____

Dear Parent,

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for my Master's Degree in Psychology at California State College at San Bernardino, I am conducting a study on the development of children's attitudes towards concepts of living and non-living matters (life and death). The purpose of this study is to investigate the growing child's ideas about death. Four different age levels will be used: 3-5, 7-9, 11-13, and adults. Your child's participation will consist of responding either yes or no to 24 questions on a questionnaire. All those participating will be asked the same questions. I am only interested in a comparison of different age levels. The questionnaire will be administered at your child's school and will require only 5-10 minutes of their time.

Names of individual children will not be used. There will be no invasion of your child's privacy. Participation is entirely voluntary. The information gathered will be used for research purposes only in an attempt to understand

the development of children's attitudes and ideas about death. My study has been approved by the district research and development office and will be supervised.

I have discussed my study with the school principal, _____ . He has found it to be interesting and worthwhile and has given his approval.

Your signature on the slip below will support this research by permitting your child to participate. Please return this form with your child to his or her teacher.

Should you be interested in the results, they will be available in approximately 2 months upon request. If you have any concerns regarding your child's participation in this study either before or after its completion, please feel free to call (714-882-0644).

.Sincerely,

Karen Paton, MA Candidate

C. Hoffman, Ph.D.
Master's Thesis Advisor

(Do not detach)

My child may not participate. My child may participate.

Parent's Signature

Parent's Signature

Date _____

APPENDIX D

PARENT APPROVAL RESPONSES

| Age Level | Total Sent Out | Disapproved | Approved | Lost etc. | Requested Results |
|-----------|----------------|-------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|
| 3-5 | 60 | 2 | 58 | 0 | 1 |
| 7-9 | 200 | 35 | 108 | 57 | 2 |
| 11-13 | 200 | 4 | 76 | 120 | 1 |

APPENDIX E

TUKEY'S HONEST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES AMONG MEANS FOR THE CONCEPT OF REVERSIBILITY

| | \bar{X}_1 | \bar{X}_2 | \bar{X}_3 | \bar{X}_4 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| \bar{X}_1 | _____ | 3.38* | 4.58* | 5.14* |
| \bar{X}_2 | _____ | _____ | 1.20* | 1.76* |
| \bar{X}_3 | _____ | _____ | _____ | .56 |
| \bar{X}_4 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

*HSD .01, 45 = .671

\bar{X}_1 = 3-5 years of age group.

\bar{X}_2 = 7-9 years of age group.

\bar{X}_3 = 11-13 years of age group.

\bar{X}_4 = Adult age group.

APPENDIX F

TUKEY'S HONEST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES AMONG MEANS FOR THE CONCEPT OF PERSONIFICATION

| | \bar{X}_1 | \bar{X}_2 | \bar{X}_3 | \bar{X}_4 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| \bar{X}_1 | _____ | 2.04* | .12 | .40 |
| \bar{X}_2 | _____ | _____ | 2.16* | 2.44* |
| \bar{X}_3 | _____ | _____ | _____ | .28 |
| \bar{X}_4 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

*HSD .01, 45 = .72

\bar{X}_1 = 3-5 years of age group.

\bar{X}_2 = 7-9 years of age group.

\bar{X}_3 = 11-13 years of age group.

\bar{X}_4 = Adult age group.

APPENDIX G

TUKEY'S HONEST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES AMONG MEANS FOR THE CONCEPT OF DENIAL

| | \bar{X}_1 | \bar{X}_2 | \bar{X}_3 | \bar{X}_4 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| \bar{X}_1 | _____ | 3.74* | 5.12* | 5.32* |
| \bar{X}_2 | _____ | _____ | 1.38* | 1.58* |
| \bar{X}_3 | _____ | _____ | _____ | .20 |
| \bar{X}_4 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

*HSD .01, 45 = .69

\bar{X}_1 = 3-5 years of age group.

\bar{X}_2 = 7-9 years of age group.

\bar{X}_3 = 11-13 years of age group.

\bar{X}_4 = Adult age group.

APPENDIX H

TUKEY'S HONEST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES AMONG MEANS FOR THE CONCEPT OF FINALITY

| | \bar{X}_1 | \bar{X}_2 | \bar{X}_3 | \bar{X}_4 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| \bar{X}_1 | _____ | 4.36* | 5.48* | 5.62* |
| \bar{X}_2 | _____ | _____ | 1.12* | 1.26* |
| \bar{X}_3 | _____ | _____ | _____ | .14 |
| \bar{X}_4 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

*HSD .01, 45 = .54

\bar{X}_1 = 3-5 years of age group.

\bar{X}_2 = 7-9 years of age group.

\bar{X}_3 = 11-13 years of age group.

\bar{X}_4 = Adult age group.

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